

Message Text

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PAGE 01 SAN SA 00470 311438Z
ACTION HA-05

INFO OCT-01 ARA-10 ISO-00 IO-13 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05
H-01 INR-07 L-03 NSAE-00 NSC-05 PA-01 PRS-01
SP-02 SS-15 USIA-06 AID-05 IGA-02 /082 W
-----101085 010009Z /41
R 302231Z JAN 78
FM AMEMBASSY SAN SALVADOR
TO SECSTATE WASHDC 6840
INFO AMEMBASSY MANAGUA

C O N F I D E N T I A L SAN SALVADOR 00470

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, PINT, OAS, ES
SUBJECT: MEETING OF MOTHERS' COMMITTEE WITH IAHR

SUMMARY. TWO MEMBERS OF MOTHERS' COMMITTEE (A GROUP OF RELATIVES OF PERSONS ALLEGEDLY DETAINED BY GOES) SAID THE COMMITTEE HAD BEEN ABLE TO PRESENT ITS CASE TO THE INTER-AMERICAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION WITHOUT DIFFICULTY. THEY CLAIMED THAT THE GOES HAD MOVED DETAINEES (ESTIMATED BY THE MOTHERS' COMMITTEE TO TOTAL 90 PERSONS) TO OTHER LOCATIONS DURING IAHR VISIT SO THAT COMMISSION WAS NOT ABLE TO FIND OUT ABOUT THEIR RELATIVES. END SUMMARY.

1. ALICIA CISNEROS DE ZELAYANDIA, MOTHER OF JORGE LUIS ZELAYANDIA, AND TRANSITO NUESO CORDOBA DE RAMIREZ, MOTHER OF LIL MILAGRO, DROPPED BY THE EMBASSY ON JANUARY 24. THEY WANTED TO ASK IF THE EMBASSY, INCLUDING ITS "INTELLIGENCE SERVICE", COULD FIND OUT ANYTHING ABOUT THEIR DETAINED RELATIVES. THEY ALSO ASKED IF A TRIP TO THE U.S. TO TALK WITH CONGRESSMEN MIGHT HELP THEM TO AID THEIR DETAINED RELATIVES. THEY STATED THAT THEY WERE SPEAKING NOT ONLY ON BEHALF OF THEMSELVES, BUT ALSO THE "COMMITTEE OF MOTHERS AND FAMILIES OF POLITICAL PRISONERS AND DISAPPEARED PERSONS OF EL SALVADOR" (HEREINAFTER
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PAGE 02 SAN SA 00470 311438Z

REFERRED TO AS "MOTHERS' COMMITTEE). THE COMMITTEE IS SUPPOSED TO BE MADE UP OF RELATIVES OF PERSONS ALLEGEDLY HELD BY THE GOES. (THE COMMITTEE WAS ONLY RECENTLY FORMED, ITS FIRST ACTION HAVING BEEN TO PRESENT A PETITION TO THE LEGISLATIVE ASSEMBLY ON BEHALF OF DETAINED PERSONS ON DECEMBER 6, 1977. THE COMMITTEE ALSO MET WITH CONGRESSMAN DRINAN ON HIS RECENT VISIT.)

2. EMBOFF REPLIED THAT EMBASSY HAD NO BETTER INFORMTION ON THE STATUS OF PRISONERS THAN THE COMMITTEE ITSELF AND SAID THAT HE WAS IN NO POSITION TO JUDGE WHETHER A TRIP TO THE U.S. MIGHT PROVE BENEFICIAL. EMBOFF ASKED IF THEY HAD TAKEN ADVANTAGE OF THE "HABEAS CORPUS" PROVISIONS PROVIDED UNDER THE CONSTITUTION OF EL SALVADOR. THEY REPLIED THEY HAD BUT TO NO AVAIL. EMBOFF ASKED IF THEY HAD NOT BEEN ABLE TO PRESENT THEIR CASE TO THE INTER-AMERICAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION ON ITS RECENT VISIT TO EL SALVADOR.

3. ZELAYANDIA AND RAMIREZ REPLIED THAT THEY AND OTHER MEMBERS OF THE MOTHERS' COMMITTEE HAD MET WITH THE COMMISSION WITHOUT DIFFICULTY AND HAD PRESENTED IT WITH NUMEROUS DOCUMENTS. HOWEVER, THEY SAID THE COMMISSION HAD NOT BEEN ABLE TO FIND OUT ANYTHING ABOUT THEIR RELATIVES ON ITS VISITS TO DETENTION FACILITIES SINCE, THE TWO RELATIVES CLAIMED, THE GOES HAD MOVED THE DETAINEES TO OTHER LOCATIONS. THEY SAID THEY HAD HEARD RUMORS TO THE EFFECT THAT THE DETAINEES WERE MOVED TO INSANE ASYLUMS AND EVEN A BORDER TOWN IN NICARAGUA. IT WAS FOR THIS REASON THEY WERE ASKING FOR EMBASSY ASSISTANCE IN FINDING OUT WHEREABOUTS OF THEIR RELATIVES.

4. EMBOFF REITERATED AGAIN THAT THE EMBASSY HAD NO SUCH INFORMATION AND ASKED ABOUT THE COMMITTEE'S ESTIMATE OF CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 SAN SA 00470 311438Z

NUMBER OF PEOPLE ALLEGEDLY DETAINED BY THE GOES. ZELAYANDIA AND RAMIREZ SAID THEY THOUGHT THE NUMBER WAS NINETY (90) AND THAT THE FIGURE MIGHT BE HIGHER SINCE MORE RELATIVES OF ALLEGEDLY DETAINED PERSONS WERE COMING FORWARD AS THEY HEARD ABOUT THE MOTHERS' COMMITTEE.
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Message Attributes

Automatic Decaptioning: Z
Capture Date: 01 jan 1994
Channel Indicators: n/a
Current Classification: UNCLASSIFIED
Concepts: COMMITTEE MEETINGS
Control Number: n/a
Copy: SINGLE
Draft Date: 30 jan 1978
Decaption Date: 20 Mar 2014
Decaption Note: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Action: RELEASED
Disposition Approved on Date:
Disposition Case Number: n/a
Disposition Comment: 25 YEAR REVIEW
Disposition Date: 20 Mar 2014
Disposition Event:
Disposition History: n/a
Disposition Reason:
Disposition Remarks:
Document Number: 1978SANSAA00470
Document Source: CORE
Document Unique ID: 00
Drafter: n/a
Enclosure: n/a
Executive Order: GS
Errors: N/A
Expiration:
Film Number: D780046-1087
Format: TEL
From: SAN SALVADOR
Handling Restrictions:
Image Path:
ISecure: 1
Legacy Key: link1978/newtext/t1978017/aaaaafvm.tel
Line Count: 100
Litigation Code IDs:
Litigation Codes:
Litigation History:
Locator: TEXT ON-LINE, ON MICROFILM
Message ID: 023ffce3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Office: ACTION HA
Original Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Original Handling Restrictions: ONLY
Original Previous Classification: n/a
Original Previous Handling Restrictions: n/a
Page Count: 2
Previous Channel Indicators: n/a
Previous Classification: CONFIDENTIAL
Previous Handling Restrictions: ONLY
Reference: n/a
Retention: 0
Review Action: RELEASED, APPROVED
Review Content Flags:
Review Date: 11 jul 2005
Review Event:
Review Exemptions: n/a
Review Media Identifier:
Review Release Date: n/a
Review Release Event: n/a
Review Transfer Date:
Review Withdrawn Fields: n/a
SAS ID: 3784706
Secure: OPEN
Status: NATIVE
Subject: MEETING OF MOTHERS' COMMITTEE WITH IAHRG SUMMARY. TWO MEMBERS OF MOTHERS' COMMITTEE (A GROUP OF RELATIVES OF PERSONS ALLEGEDLY DETAINED BY GOES) S AID
TAGS: SHUM, PINT, ES, OAS
To: STATE
Type: TE
vdkgvkey: odbc://SAS/SAS.dbo.SAS_Docs/023ffce3-c288-dd11-92da-001cc4696bcc
Review Markings:
Sheryl P. Walter
Declassified/Released
US Department of State
EO Systematic Review
20 Mar 2014
Markings: Sheryl P. Walter Declassified/Released US Department of State EO Systematic Review 20 Mar 2014